

Grade: 23

Course: 321B No 6

Critique of Term Project for Fr. Herbert Ryan, S.J.

Format:

Excellent Very Good ✓ Good Adequate Unsatisfactory

Journal of Research:

1. Procedure

Excellent ✓ Very Good Good Adequate Unsatisfactory

2. Progressive Limitation of Topic

Excellent ✓ Very Good Good Adequate Unsatisfactory

3. Final Statement of Research Problem

Excellent ✓ Very Good Good Adequate Unsatisfactory

Bibliography:

1. Final Search Bibliography

Excellent Very Good Good ✓ Adequate Unsatisfactory

2. Selection of Initial Readings from Search Bibliography

Excellent Very Good ✓ Good Adequate Unsatisfactory

3. Projected Further Readings to Refine Research Problem

Excellent Very Good ✓ Good Adequate Unsatisfactory

Further Comment:

*First rate job - good & clear journal with
a major problem (Luther's fear of God) chosen.*

Congratulations

ERASMUS:
THE LUTHERAN CONTROVERSY

by
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A Paper Submitted to Father Ryan, S.J. of the Religious
Studies Department of Loyola Marymount University in
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
RS 321 B

April 14

1978

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March 8

Tonight I went to the Charles Von der Ahe Library here at Loyola Marymount University to do some research on some poor unsuspecting topic. Last year I had done some research on Erasmus in Fr. O'Neill's Renaissance and Reformation class. So I decided to reevaluate my previous research and see if ol' Erasmus was still holding down the fort. I, therefore, proceeded to skim over the article on Desiderius Erasmus in the New Catholic Encyclopedia. The NCE was very efficient in its presentation of the facts:

Humanist, classical and patristic scholar,
first editor of the Greek New Testament;
b. Rotterdam, Holland, Oct. 27, 1466; d.
Basel, Switzerland, July 12, 1536. He was
an illegitimate child, and it seems probable
that his father was a priest. Educated
first at Gouda, and then from 1475 under
the Brethren of the Common Life, Erasmus
remained at Deventer for 8 years; there is
no doubt that this tradition shaped his later
educational ideals.

After skimming the article I had it xeroxed so that I might be able to read at my own leasurly pace at a later date.

March 9

Today I reread the article in the NCE. One unique fact about Erasmus' life stuck out in my mind: his desire and his ability to remain free from nationalistic identities and causes. At a time when all of Europe was beginning to feel the heavy hand of a rising national identity Erasmus remained as it were a Roman citizen, in the proper sense of the word.

The article in the NCE also pointed out that "at the height of his fame, Erasmus occupied a position in the history of European literature rivaled perhaps only by that of Voltaire." That being the case, I decided from the beginning to restrict my research to the relationship between Erasmus and Martin Luther.

March 12

Today's visit to the library here at LMU brought me to an interesting collection of information entitled The Encyclopedia Americana (International Edition); I decided to look into the articles on Erasmus in several secular encyclopedias to make sure of the objectivity of the article in the New Catholic Encyclopedia. The article in the Encyclopedia Americana was a basic re-hash of all the information that I had received from the article in the NCE.

The article contained the basic facts: that Erasmus' parents died of the plague around 1484 and that at the urging of his guardian and peers he entered the Augustinian monastery at Steyn (the NCE places the dates for all these events about two years ahead of the dates in the EA) in 1487. He did not, however, find the monastic life to his liking so in 1494 at the invitation of the bishop of Cambrai he entered the bishop's service. But within a year Erasmus had persuaded the bishop to not only grant him a leave of absence from the monastery (to which he never returned) but also permission to enter the famed college de Montaigu of Paris. Unfortunately he did not find

the discipline imposed by the director, Jean Standonck to his liking either. Equally uncongenial were the lectures on scholastic philosophy and theology at the university. Erasmus tried to escape from this environment by cultivating prominent literary figures, among whom were quite a few Italian humanist exiles who were beginning to introduce new standards of taste. Our next journey finds Erasmus heading for England in 1499 which marks a decisive stage in Erasmus' intellectual development. He had an opportunity to meet such men as John Colet, Thomas More, and Archbishop Warham. Contact with these men and other scholars lead him to see the possible benefits that might be achieved by applying the the great texts of the Christian faith the same methods of exegesis that these humanists were applying to the classics.

Erasmus' life at this point begins to take on its "cosmopolitan" style. He returned to France in 1500 and spent some years there and in the Low Countries. His second visit to England in 1505-6 was followed by a few years in Italy (1506-1509), at which time he became associated with the Aldine Academy in Venice and had an opportunity to visit the Rome of Julius II. From Rome Erasmus returned to England on the accession of Henry VIII. In 1511 he settled in Queen's College, Cambridge, where he spent two and a half years. Leaving England again in 1514, he went first to Basel and then for brief periods to Louvain and to Holland. In 1521 he returned to Basel, where he remained for the next eight years, his longest residence in one place. The official acceptance of the Reformation in Basel in 1529 caused

his retreat to the imperial town of Freiburg-im-Breisgau, where he spent the next six years. Then for unknown reasons Erasmus found himself drawn once more to the happiest of his homes, at Basel. Here, in the midst of the group of Protestant scholars who had long been his truest friends, and, so far as is known, without relations of any sort with the Roman Catholic Church, he died.

March 16

Today I once again made my way to the Charles Von der Ahe Library. My investigation led me this time to the New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge. (what a title!) *Amn !!!*
This encyclopedia had a well organized article on Erasmus that enabled me to more easily locate the period in Erasmus' life in which he had to deal with the Lutheran controversy.

The outbreak of the Lutheran movement in the year following the publication of the New Testament brought the severest test of Erasmus's personal and scholarly character. It made the issue between European society and the Roman Church system so clear that no man could quite escape the summons to range himself on one side or the other of the great debate. Erasmus, at the height of his literary fame, was inevitably called upon to take sides, but partizanship in any issue which he was not at liberty himself to define was foreign equally to his nature and his habits.... There can be no doubt that Erasmus was in sympathy with the main points in the Lutheran criticism of the Church. (NS-HERK, iv, p.165)

Although I am not altogether positive, the use of ecclesiastical terms points out that this encyclopedia is the product of Protestant scholarship. This fact is interesting to me, not

because I distrust Protestant scholarship, but because the little bit of information about the last years of Erasmus' life that I included in the last entry in this journal (the theory that Erasmus "without relations of any sort with the Roman Catholic Church...died") was not found in the NCE or the EA but (so far) only in the NS-HERK.

Getting back to the Lutheran conflict..., the NS-HERK shows Erasmus as being overwhelmingly sympathetic toward the Lutheran cause.

When Erasmus was charged---and very justly---with having "laid the egg that Luther hatched" he half admitted the truth of the charge, but said he had expected quite another kind of a bird. (NS-HERK, iv,p.165)

March 21

This weekend was not quite as long as I had hoped it would be. Today I purchased a book published by New American Library, Inc. entitled THE AGE OF BELIEF: The Medieval Philosophers. During my previous investigation of the Erasmus/Luther Debate I learned that both parties respected and drew from the philosophy of Saint Augustine. Because my research is being geared toward the investigation of the documents written by Erasmus and Luther, On the Free Will and On the Bondage of the Will respectively, I read the section found in The Age of Belief originally take from Augustine's Book On The Free Choice of the Will (Trans. Francis Tourscher, Peter Reilly Co.). The editors of the book The Age of Belief first quote an essay on the problem of evil, but the essay not only fails to address the

Doctrines of Predestination and Free Will but also implies that evil does not in fact exist. The second essay again does not deal with the problem of the co-existence of God's Predestination and Man's Free Will, but discusses with the Enquirer the possibility of arriving at a certain knowledge of God's existence.

Fortunately however, I happened upon a book (with the help of Mike Lash) entitled The Philosophy of the Middle Ages, edited by Arthur Hyman and James J. Walsh that offered some assistance. In the excerpts selected by Hyman and Walsh Augustine appears to be my in favor of man's Free Will:

Man himself is something good in so far as he is man, for he can live rightly when he so wills. (ibid.,p.65)

Aug.-- Why do you think our free will is opposed to God's foreknowledge? Is it because it is foreknowledge simply, or because it is God's foreknowledge?

E.-- In the main because it is God's foreknowledge.

Aug.-- If you know in advance that such and such a man would sin there would be no necessity for him to sin.

E.-- Indeed there would, for I should have no real foreknowledge unless I knew for certain what was going to happen.

Aug.-- So it is foreknowledge generally and not God's foreknowledge specially that causes the events foreknown to happen by necessity? There would be no such thing as foreknowledge unless there was certain foreknowledge.

E.-- I agree. But why these questions?

Aug.-- Unless I am mistaken, you would not directly compel the man to sin, though you knew beforehand that he was going to sin. Nor does your prescience in itself compel him to sin even though he was certainly going to sin, as we must assume if you have real prescience. So you know beforehand what another is going to do with his own will. Similarly God compels no man to sin, though he sees beforehand those who are going to sin by their own will. (ibid.,p61)

This response really interested me. Saint Augustine was saying, "Yes, God has a knowledge of the 'future' (we must understand that with God there is no past or future, just an eternal now) but that doesn't mean that he's the direct cause or author of our every act, no more than because you know that tomorrow it is going to rain means that you are going to make it rain." This explanation was very convincing until my mind hit on an uninvestigated idea. It seems that the analogy between God and me breaks down when one realizes that I may know that tomorrow will bring rain but I had no part in creating the clouds or their given natures. I may know for a fact that "so and so" is going to sin in exactly thirty-five minutes, just as God knows, but the implications of that knowledge is different between God and me. I did not create "so and so" or assign to him a certain nature.

Is it not, therefore, contrary to God's loving nature to create an individual with the knowledge as to whether the individual shall ever enter in salvation? Would it not be better that God's will be programmed into our nature? Is he not withholding a blessing from us by creating us with a sin-nature?

But God did not withhold the lavishness of his bounty even from his creatures whom he knew beforehand would not only sin but would continue in the will to sin; for he showed it in creating them. - Saint Augustine (ibid., p63)

In response to the accusation that God created man with a sin-nature Augustine teaches that man in his present state is not perfect man that God created, but fallen man blemished by original sin. Nonetheless, God as first creator is in some way responsible for

His creation. If in creating Hi is conscious of its results and repercussions he is then, in essence, condoning or consenting to those ends.

(An important factor that I have not brought forth is the "why" question. If God did foreknow or predestine man's condition why did he give him free will ---if man in fact does have free will? It is a universal principle that love must be given freely. Therefore, if, as Augustine and other Christian writers say, man was created to love and to be loved by his creator, he must be free to give and to receive love. Hence man must have a "free will" to fulfill that purpose. Had it been any other way we would be mere actors on a celestial stage reading predetermined lines and never really experiencing the purpose for which we were created: to be one with the Father.)

March 24

Tonight while at the LMU library I happened to stumble upon a most excellent book entitled Erasmus of Christendom by Roland H. Bainton. One of the reasons for my high praise of this book is its clear use of language in such a confusing subject.

The gist of Bainton's presentation is that had there not been any Lutheran reform there certainly would have been an Erasmian Reform. Erasmus makes these statements:

Christianity has been made to consist not in loving ones neighbor, but in abstaining from butter and cheese during Lent...

Those who never in their lives endeavored to imitate Saint Francis desire to die in his cowl...

By how many human reulations has the sacraments of penitence and confession been impeded? The bolt of excommunication is ever in deadiness. The sacred authority of the Roman Pontiff is so abused by absolutions, dispensations and the like that the godly cannot see it without a sigh. Aristotle is so in vogue that there is scarcely time in the churches to interpret the gospel.. (ibid,p.97)

While Erasmus was very much concerned with the growing ostentatiousness of the Church, not enough can be said about his desire to liberate men's minds from the shackles of superstition and of ecclesiastical censorship.

His desire to see men practice their free speech, which is involved with the whole concept of the right for free scientific investigation of popularly held truths, is what got him involved in the Lutheran controvercy in the first place. On October 31, 1517 Martin Luther nailed his 95 thesis to the door of the castle at Wittenberg, denouncing the sale of indulgences. He was eventually ordered to remain silent. This call for silence perked Erasmus' ears. Erasmus was very cautious about helping this young monk. He supported Luther's desire to straighten ou the church but he did not necessarily support Luther's views or methods.

Erasmus later wrote:

Thus, then, did I favour Luther; I favoured the good that was in him, yet it was not him I favoured, but Christ's glory. And yet I saw much inside me that awoke my anxiety and suspicion, so when he approached me by letter of his own accord, I at once took the opportunity to admonish him and say what I wished him to avoid so that his mind, corrected and purified, might most fruitfully and to the great glory and service of Christ, reinstate for us the philosophy of the gospel, now almost moribund (frigescentem). (Phillips, Erasmus and the Northern Renaissance.)

Martin Luther's thesis and the defence of it eventually led him to question the absolute authority of the pope. The propositions that he raised in turn gave way to denying such doctrines as man's Free Will, and Transubstantiation. All this time Erasmus remained silent, not supporting nor condemning the man. But finally in 1524 Erasmus bent under papal pressure and wrote his response to Luther's paper Assertio.

April 6

Today I skimmed through a book published again by New American Library, Inc. that was called The Essential Erasmus, edited by John P. Dolan. Unfortunately the book did not contain the treatise that I needed, On Free Will, so I read The Handbook of the Christian Soldier (which has no bearing on this research paper).

April 9

Today I was able to get a hold of a book called LUTHER and ERASMUS: Free Will and Salvation, which is volume 17 of the Library of Christian Classics. The book simply presents the two papers published by Erasmus and Luther, On the Free Will and On the Bondage of the Will respectively and in condensed form.

The two men argued on several fronts but in the end it all came down to these two passages from Scripture:

When God in the beginning created man,
he made him subject to his own free choice.
If you choose you can keep the commandments;
it is loyalty to do his will.
There is set before you fire and water;
to whichever you choose, stretch forth your hand

Before man are life and death,
 whichever he chooses shall be given unto him.
 - Sirach 15:14-17

God has mercy on whom he wishes, and whom he wishes he make obdurate.

You will say to me, "Why, then, does he find fault? For who can oppose his will?" Friend, who are you to answer God back? Does something molded say to its molder, "Why did you make me like this?" Does not a potter have the right to make from the same lump of clay one vessel for a lofty purpose and another for a humble one? What if God, wishing to show his wrath and make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels fit for wrath, ready to be destroyed, in order to make known the riches of his glory toward the vessels for mercy, which he prepared for glory-- I am speaking about us whom he called, not only from among the Jews, but from among the Gentiles.

- Romans 9:18-24

April 13

I look back at the affects that are presently felt by the whole western world and I have to ask what it was that caused Martin Luther to be so persistent with his "inconsistent" theology? I ran across a rather interesting (I should say shocking) quote ~~the other~~ that is found in a book entitled: Life, Character and Influence of Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam, by John Joseph Mangan, A.M., M.D.

As our study of Erasmus has led us to decide definitely that he was a neurasthenic, so our study of Luther has ~~convinced~~ us that he was a psychopath, if not always, then most assuredly at intervals...(p.87)

Convinced

So now we have presented this brief sketch of Luther to our modern alienists, and we beg them to tell us whether or not this violent, irritable, intolerant, and egotistical man

with his bad head, his alternate moods of deep melancholy and high exaltation, his unstable emotions, his undue rage at opposition, in a word, the appalling defects of a character which has no analogue in all history, was sane or insane? (p.101)

Therefore, if I were called upon to write a term project with the research that I have done and the information available to me I would write about Martin Luther and his fear of God.

Excellent

Luther would repeat a confession and to be sure of including everything, would review his entire life until the confessor grew weary and exclaimed, "Man, God is not angry with you. You are angry with God. Don't you know God commands you to hope?"

This assiduous confessing certainly succeeded in clearing up any major transgressions. The leftovers with which Luther kept trotting in appeared to Staupitz to be only the scruples of a sick soul. :Look here," he said, "if you expect Christ to forgive you, come in with something to forgive---parricide, blasphemy, adultery---instead of these peccadilloes." (Bainton. Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther. p.41)